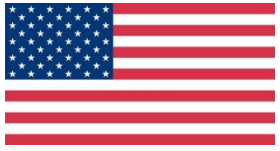
Increasing Student Talk Time in the Online Classroom

Are you teaching English online and seeking ways to help students improve their speaking skills?

Research shows that the key to an effective speaking lesson is to provide ample opportunities for students to actively participate, but many instructors are struggling to convert their favorite in-person speaking activities to the online format.

In this webinar, we will:

- examine the benefits of increasing student talk time (STT) in class
- explore various routines, activities, and tools that will give students a voice in their virtual classrooms



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Christine Esche

Christine has worked in the English language field for over a decade. She currently teaches ESL in the United States at the Waukesha County Technical College in Wisconsin, where she prepares adult immigrants to successfully enter higher education and fulfilling careers.

Previously, she served as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow in Panama. She has also provided professional development workshops for EFL instructors in Mexico and Turkey.

Christine holds a BS in International Studies-Global Security from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master of Arts in Linguistics with a TESOL graduate certificate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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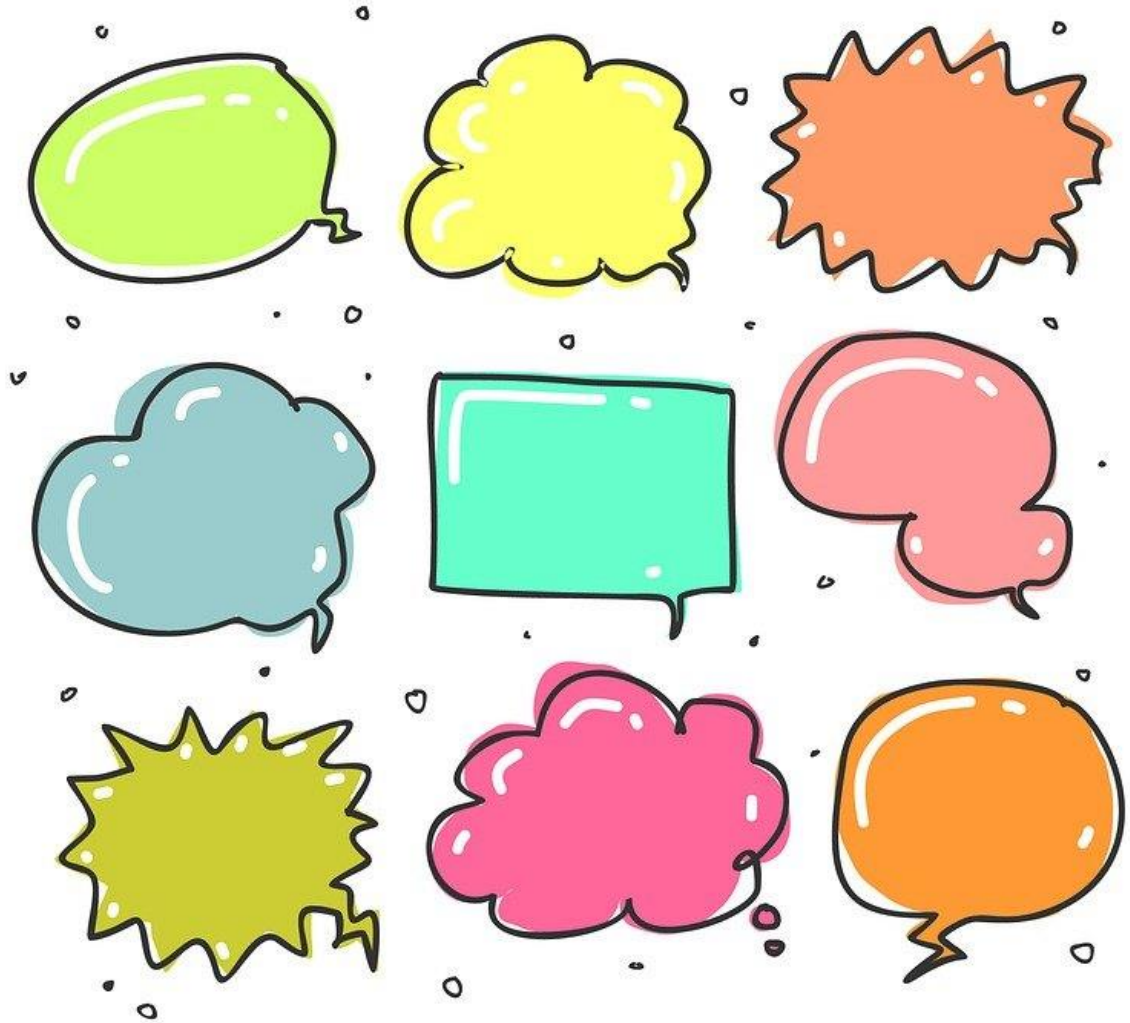

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Today's Plan

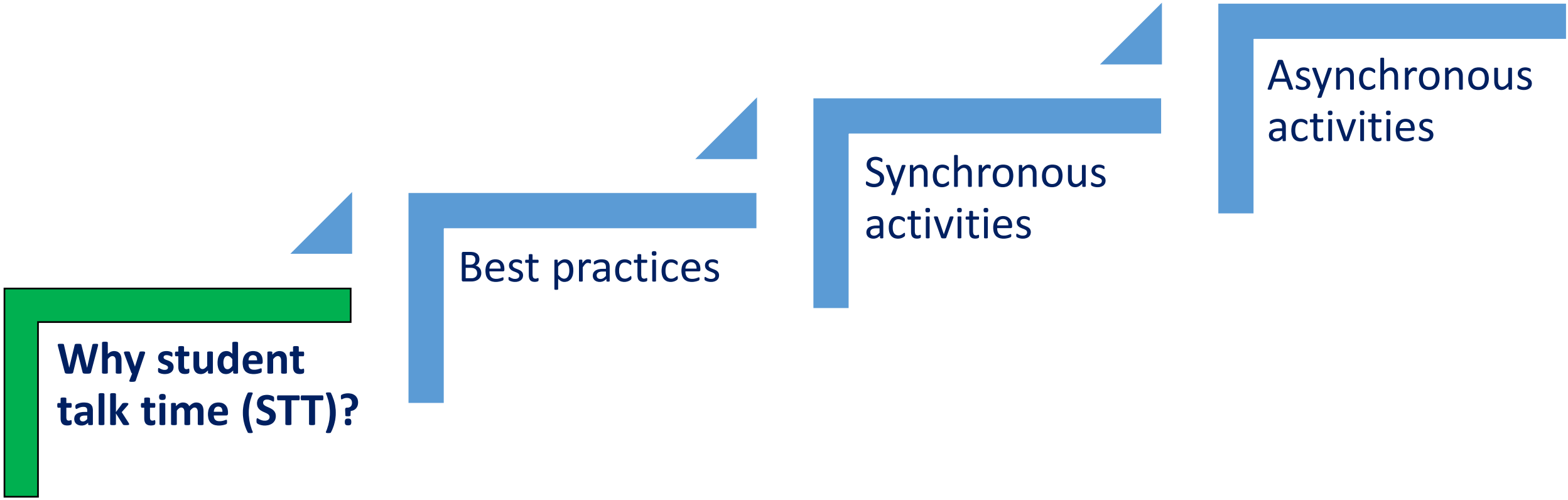
Why student talk time (STT)?

Best practices

Synchronous activities

Asynchronous activities

Today's Plan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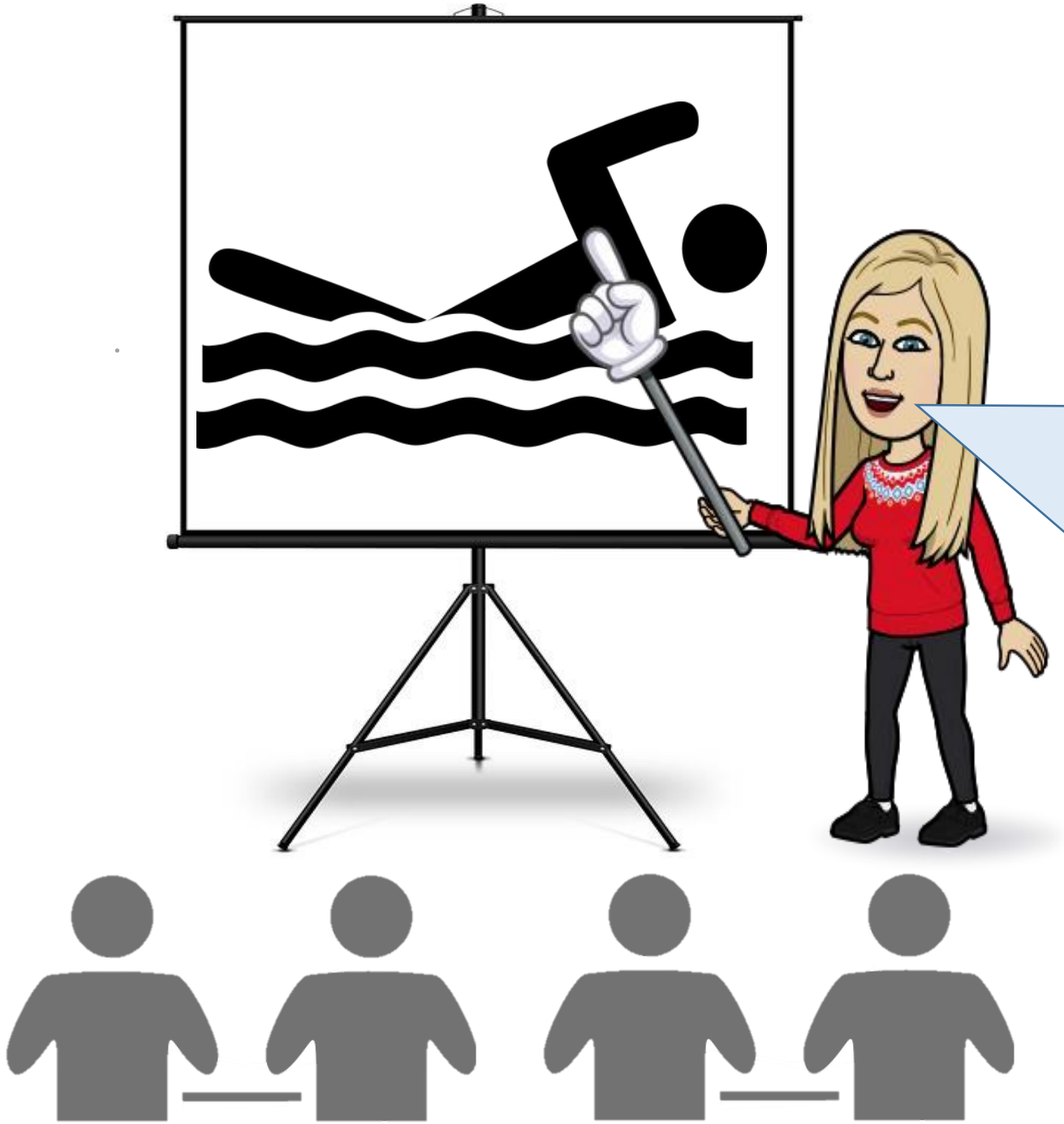
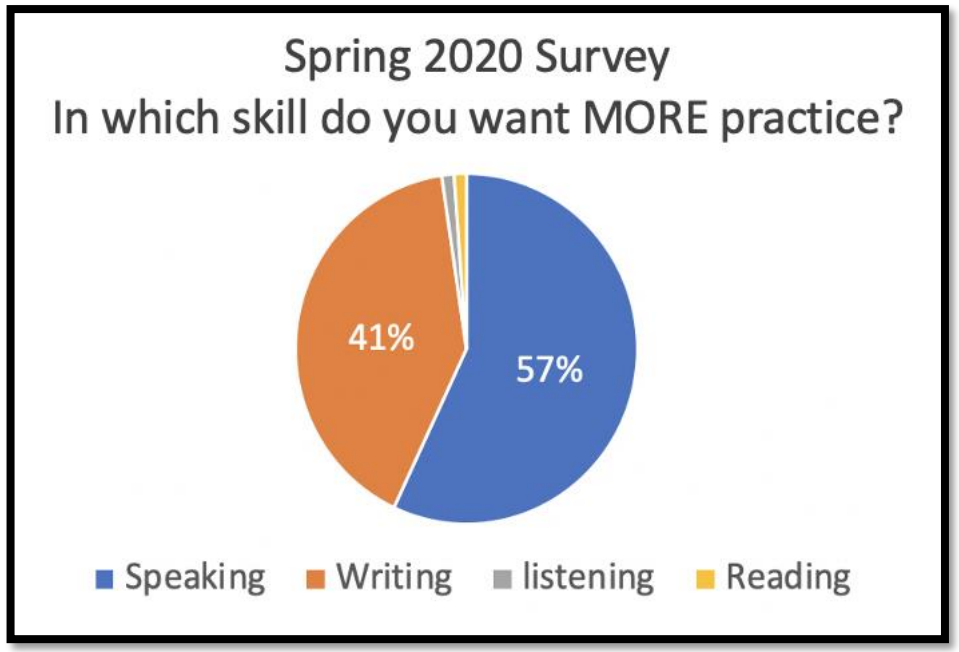


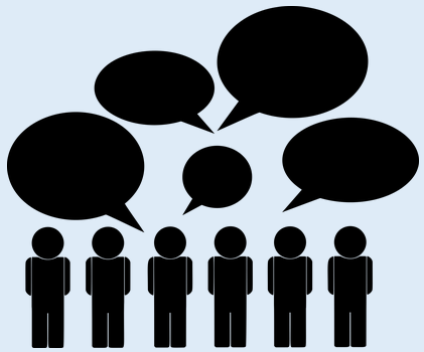
To swim, you'll need to lift one arm while pushing back with the other. At the same time, keep moving your feet up and down rapidly. It's also important to breathe between arm strokes. This will be important if you ever fall into the ocean, so your paragraph about proper swimming technique is due on Monday.

Why STT?

- Leads to greater speaking skills
- Provides chance to actively use the language
- Motivates students
- Builds community and relationships



What challenges have you faced when trying to incorporate speaking into your online classes?



Today's Plan

Why student talk time (STT)?
Best practices
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Asynchronous activities

Best Practice #1

Aim for at least 50% STT

Best Practice #2

Reduce Teacher Talk Time (TTT)

Best Practice #3

4 minutes each

>

40 seconds each

Utilize small groups

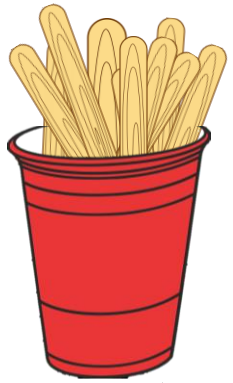
Best Practice #4

Praise

Best Practice #5

Set up for equitable participation

A few classroom management tools



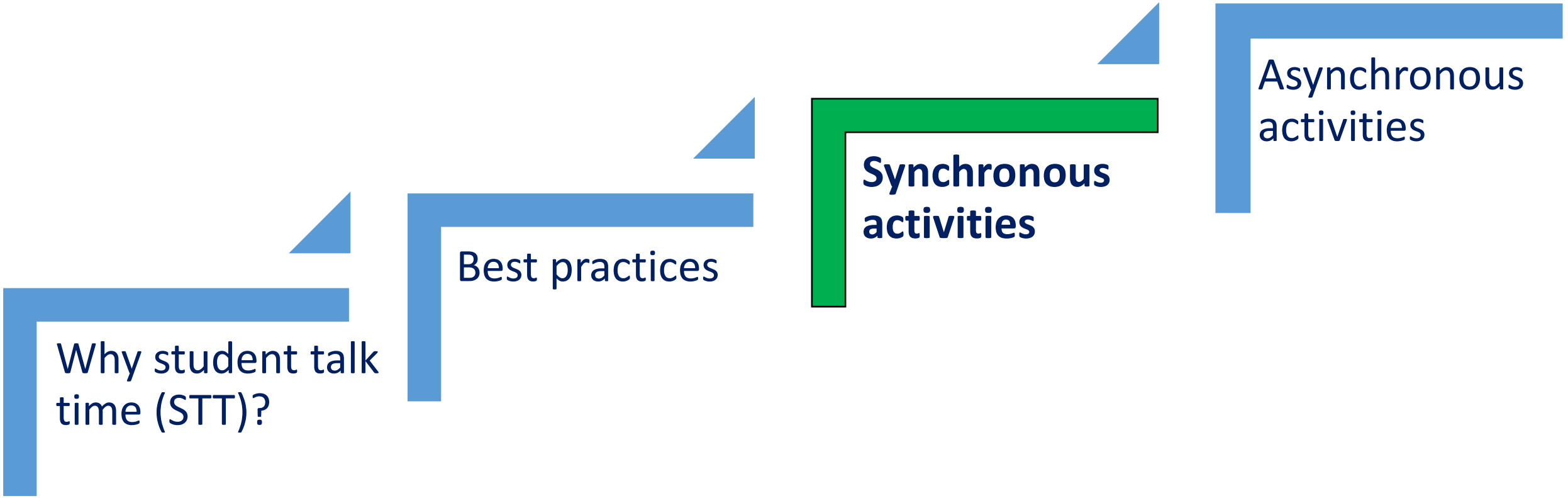
Wheelofnames.com

Best Practice #6

Don’t interrupt

Which of these best practices are you already doing? Which could you improve upon?

Today's Plan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Synchronous – Whole Class

Mystery Object

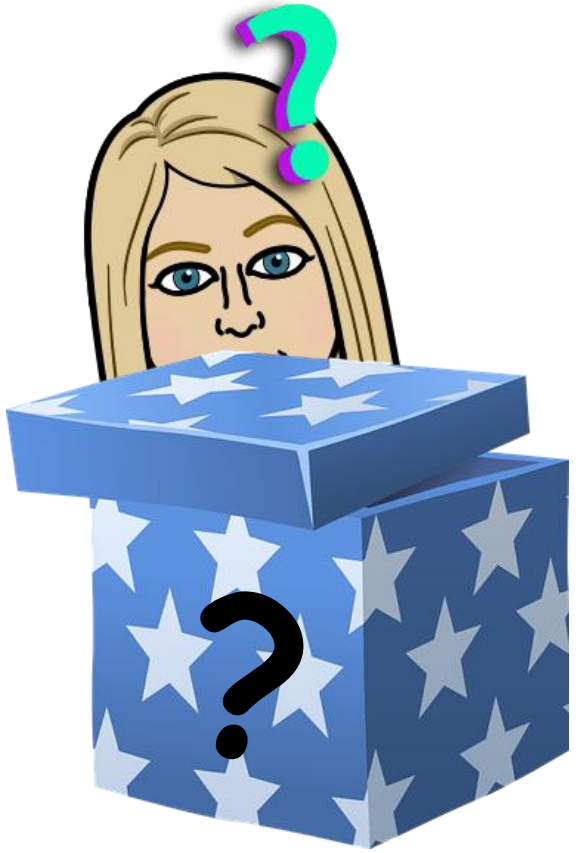
1. One person selects object related to unit of study

2. Class sets question limit
   - Assign S to keep track

3. Ss take turns asking yes/no questions until they correctly guess mystery object

Variation

- *S selects object from list*
- *T allows any type of yes/no question*



Is it…? < Yes, it is. / No, it isn't.

Does it…? < Yes, it does. / No, it doesn't.

Stand Up/Sit Down

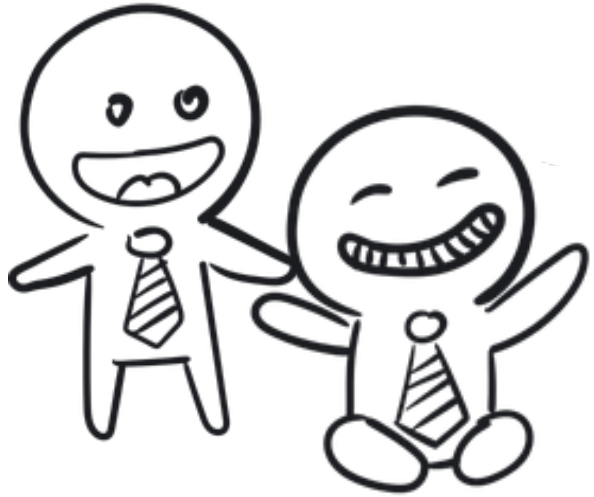
1. Each S prepares one **true** and one **false** statement related to unit of study

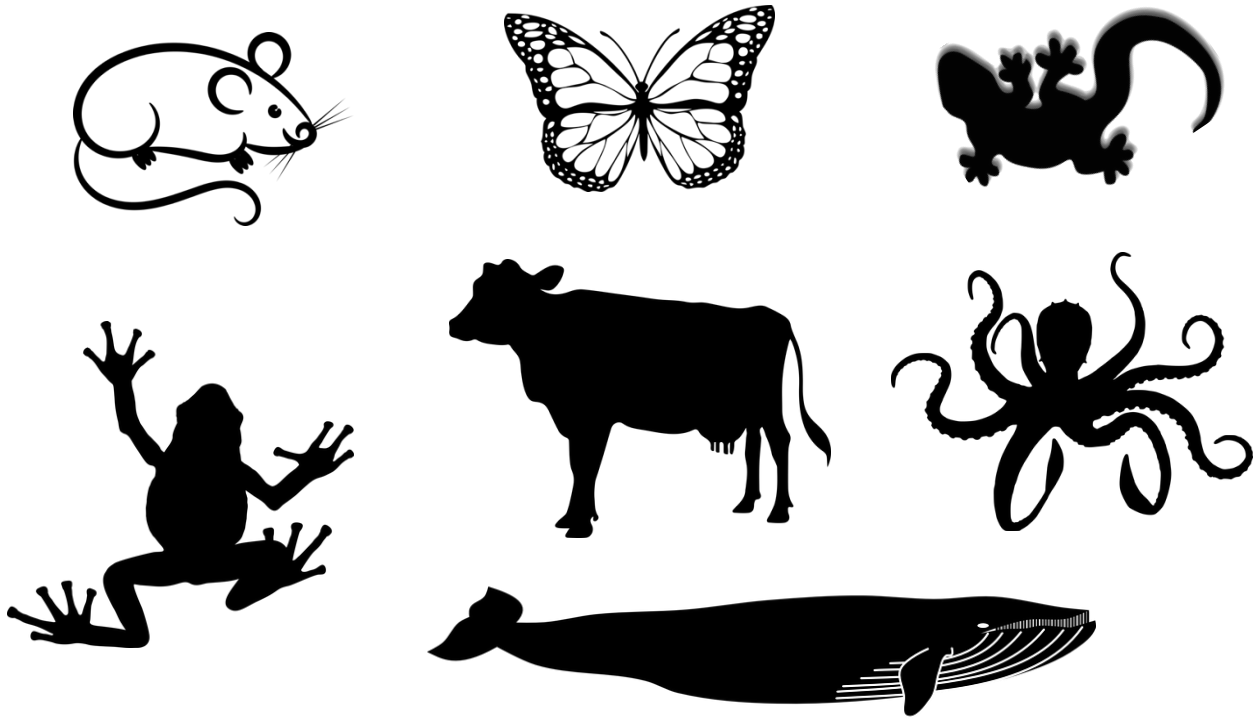
2. T calls on S to say one of their statements

3. If **true**, students **stand**.
   If **false**, students **sit**.

Variation

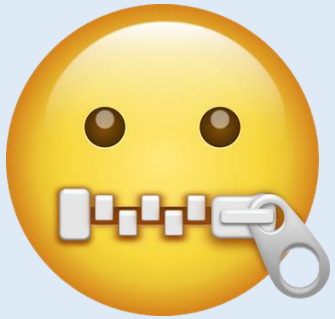
- *Ss raise sign, use chat, or use annotate to show true/false*





Scenario 1: You introduce "Mystery Object" or "Stand Up/Sit down" to your class, but when it's time to participate, no one speaks.

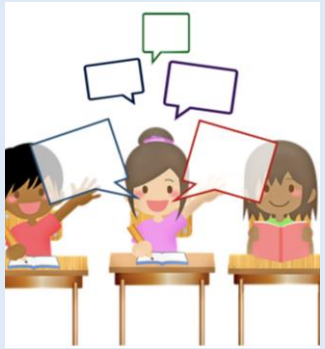
What can you do?



1) Model example
2) Add scaffolds: brainstorm and write possible things to say, then Ss read when called
3) Sing/chant together to warm up
4) Do movement together to warm up
5) Have safe classroom where mistakes are welcome and praise is given to all who try

Scenario 2: You introduce "Mystery Object" or "Stand Up/Sit Down," and when it's time to participate, one S does all the speaking.

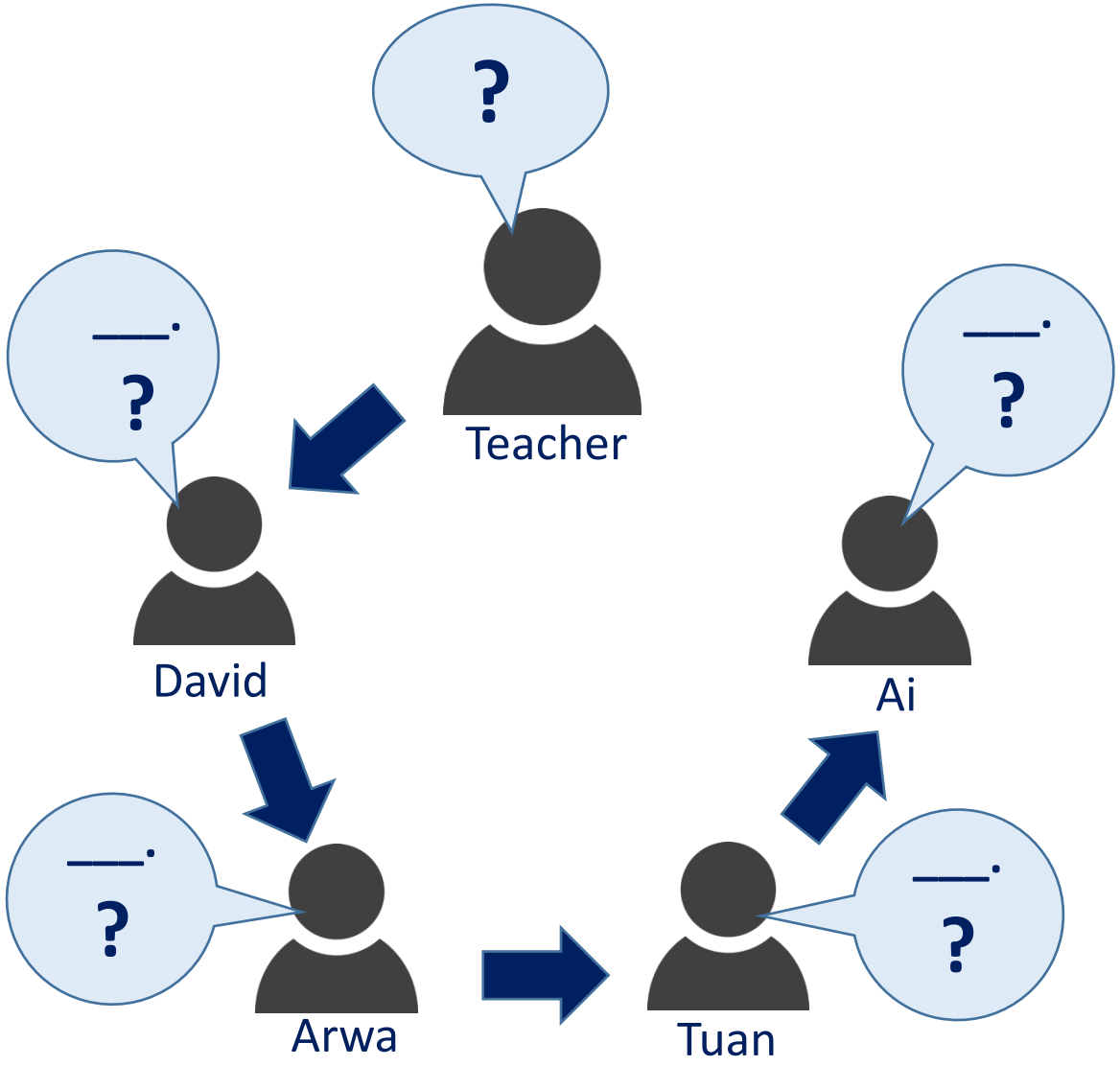
What can you do?



1) Set expectations (e.g. “everyone can speak twice”)
2) Give silent time for Ss to prepare
3) Call on Ss (e.g. list, name wheel, sticks)
4) Ask Ss to mute until called

“Ask a Classmate” Drills

1. T provides question/answer frames and vocabulary
2. T asks S a question
3. S answers, then T instructs them to ask a classmate the next question
4. Ss continue drill until T determines



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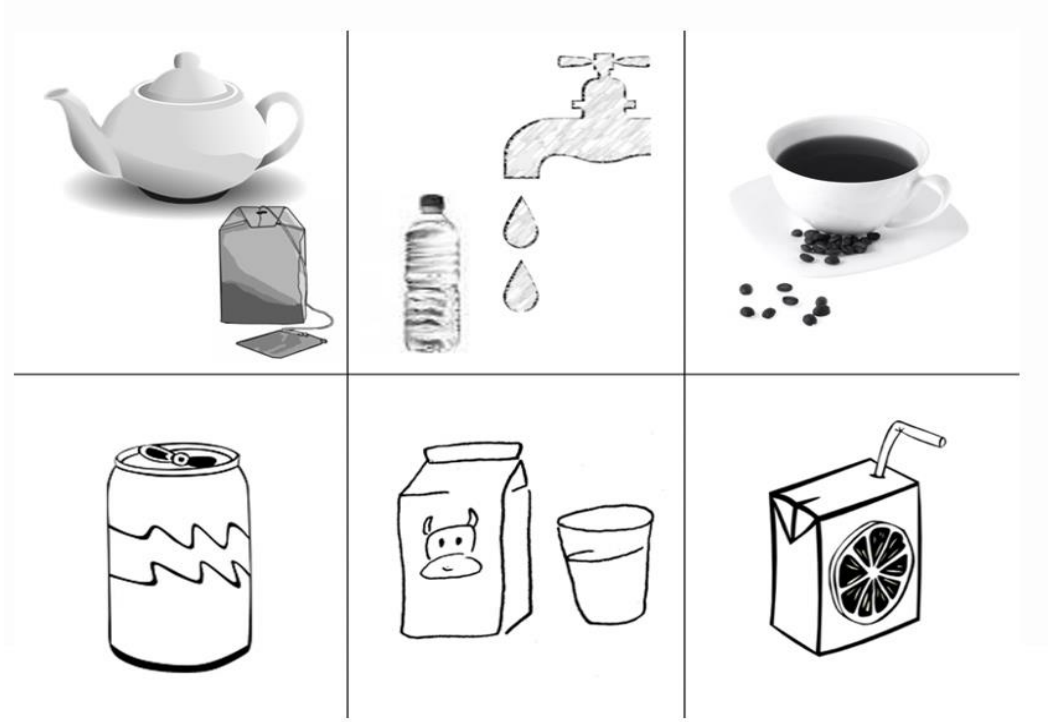
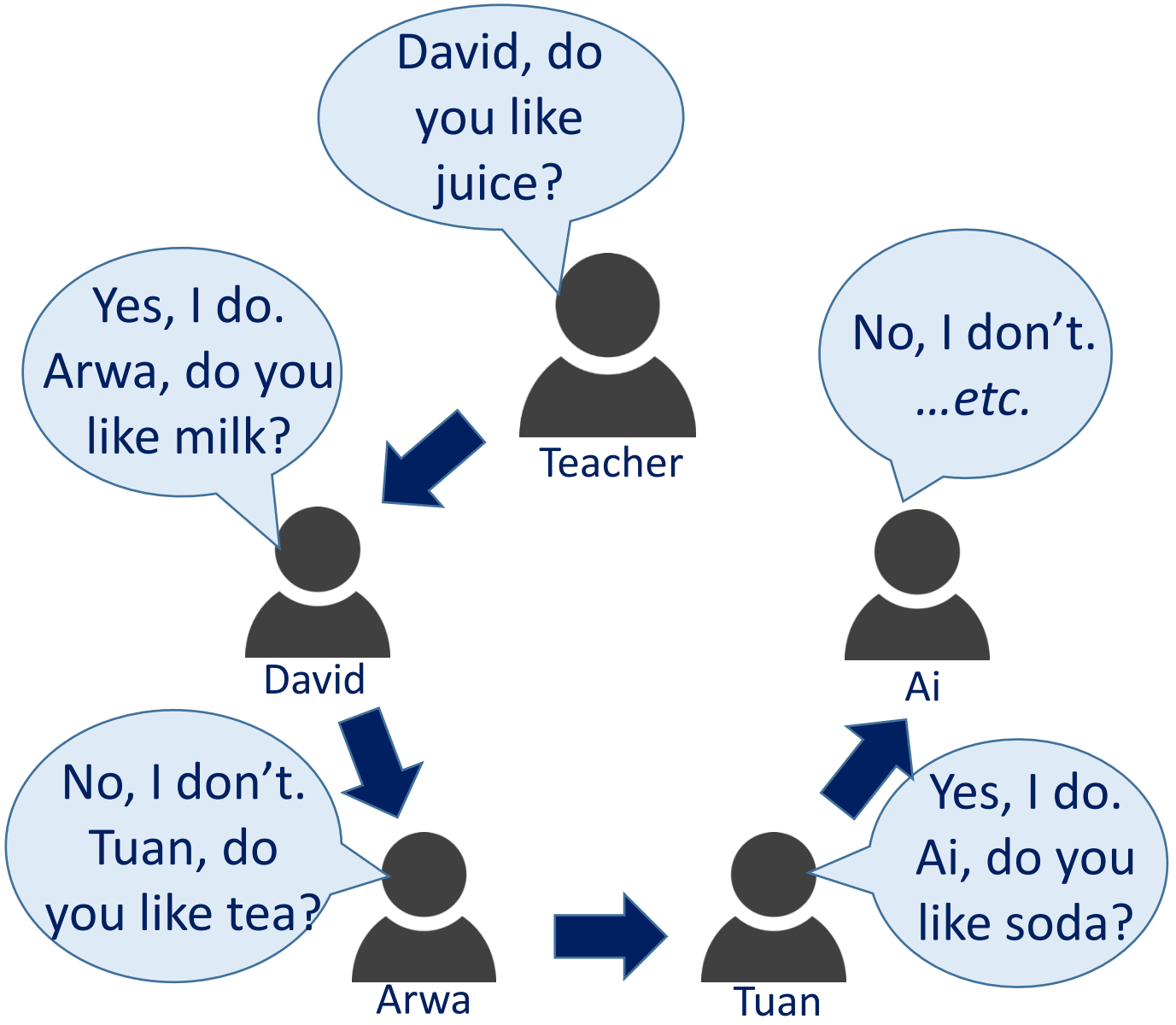


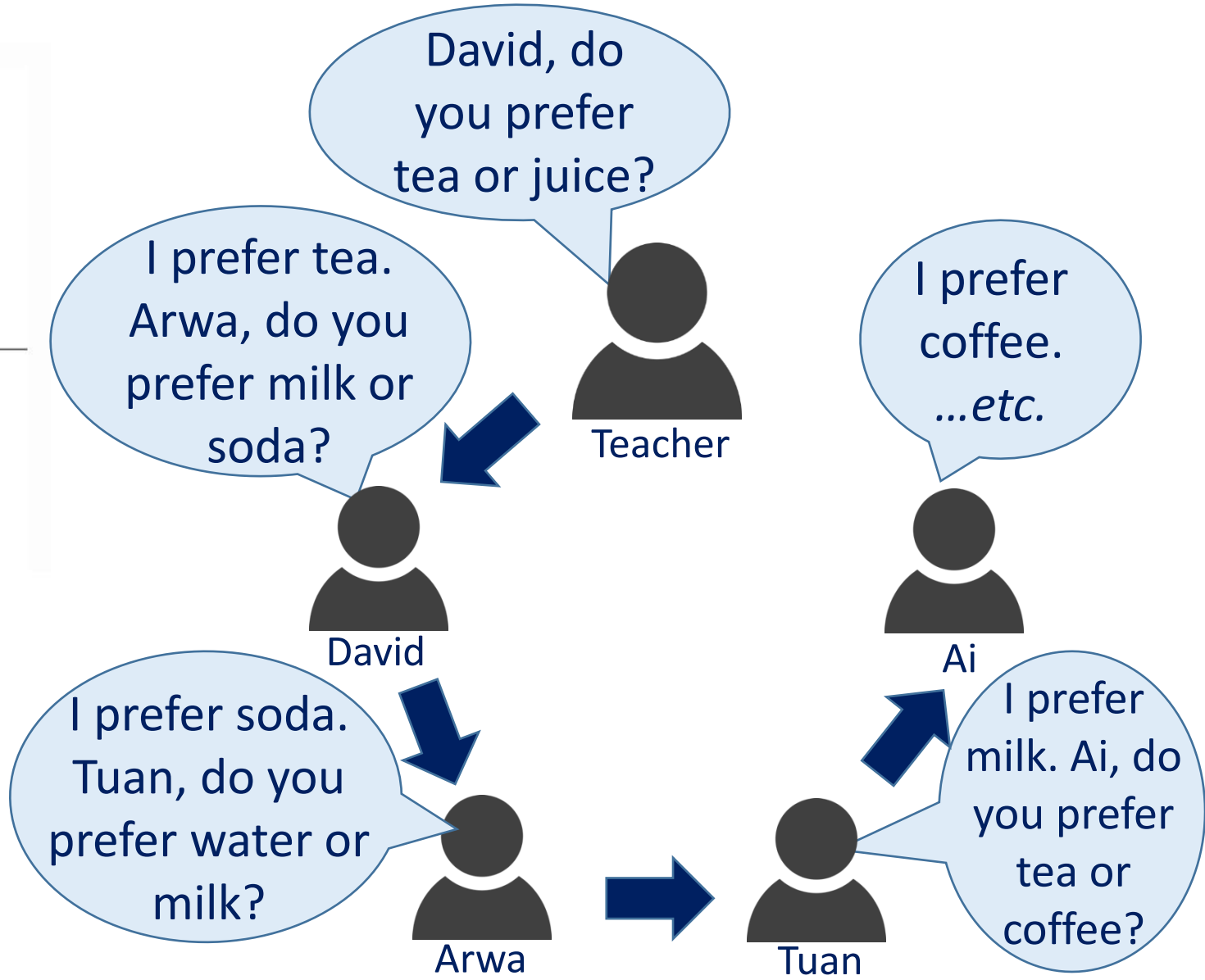
Do you like ___? < **Yes, I do.**
No, I don’t.



“Ask a Classmate” Drills

Do you prefer __or __?

I prefer __.



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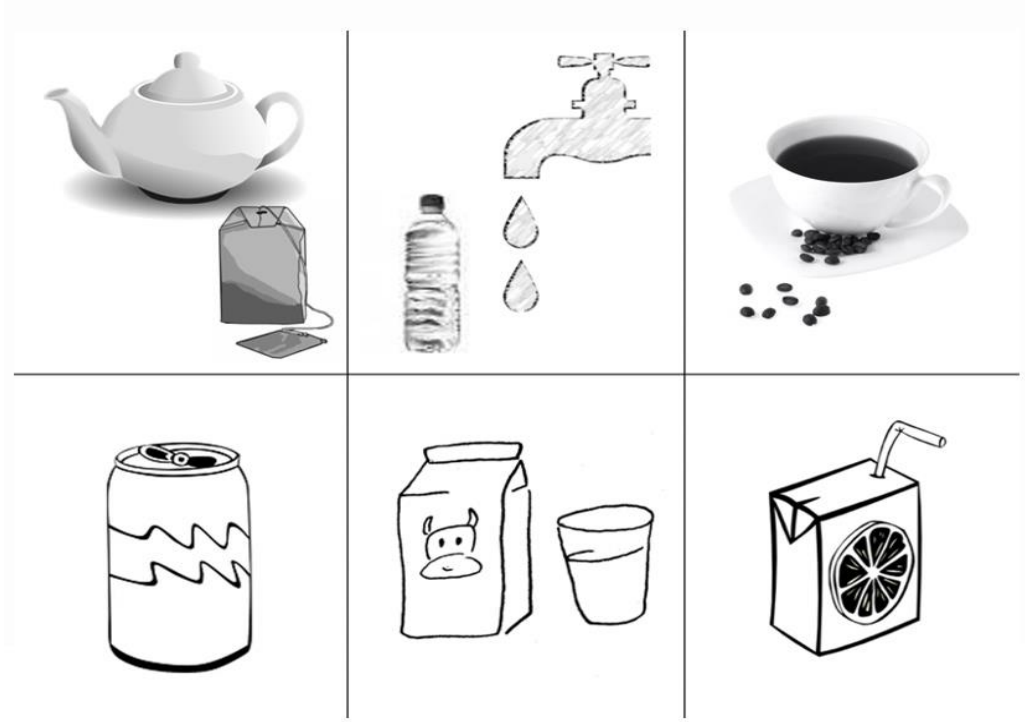
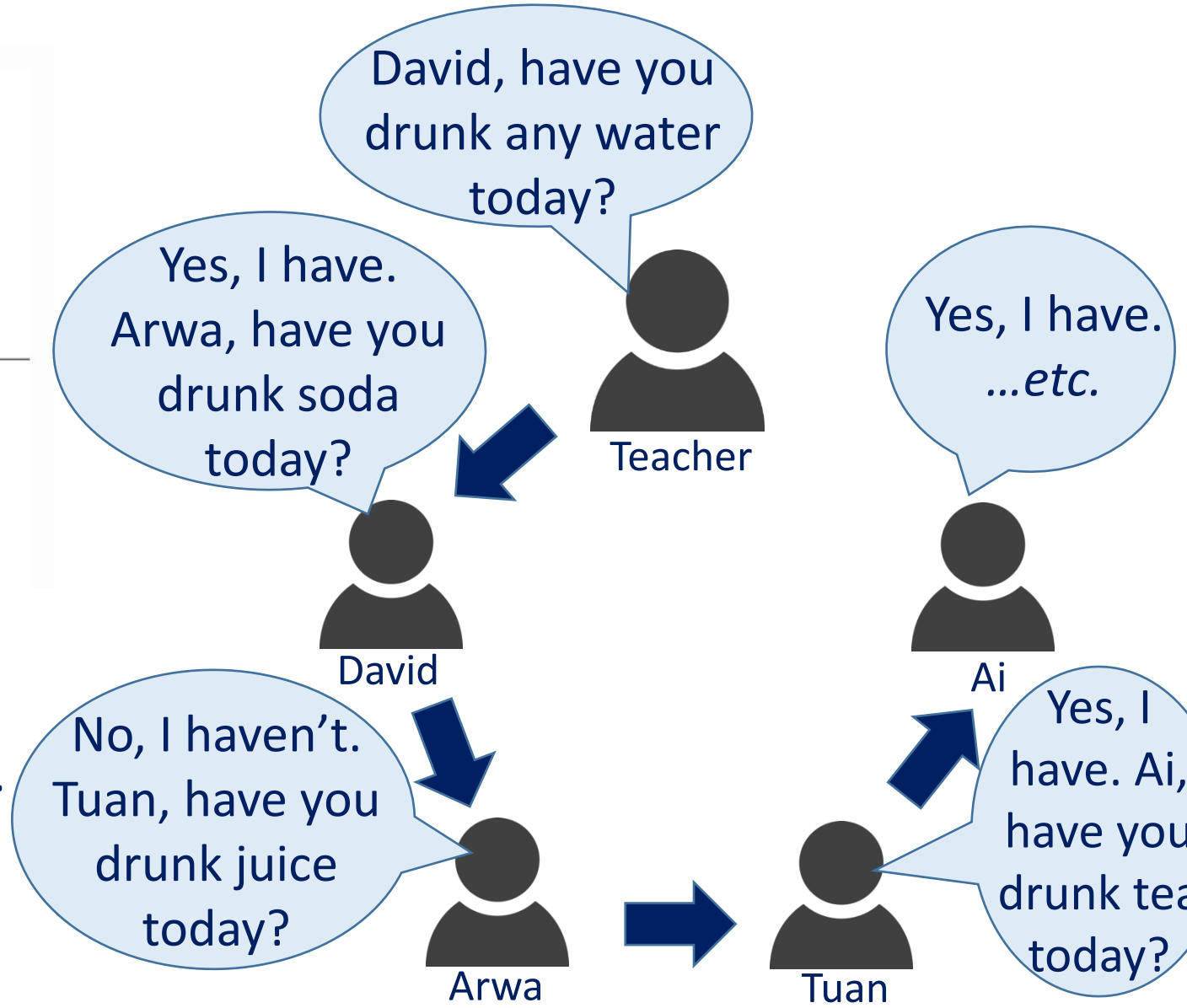
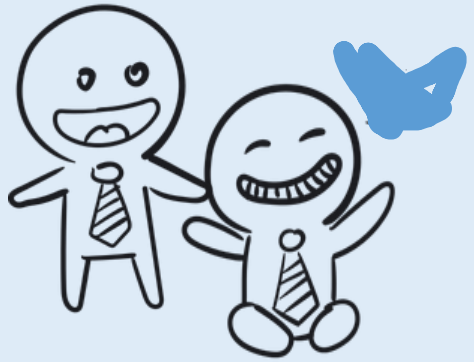
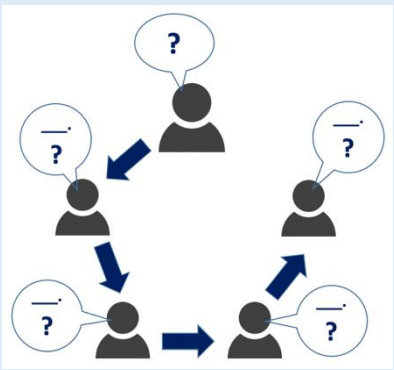


Have you drunk any __ today? < **Yes, I have. No, I haven’t.**

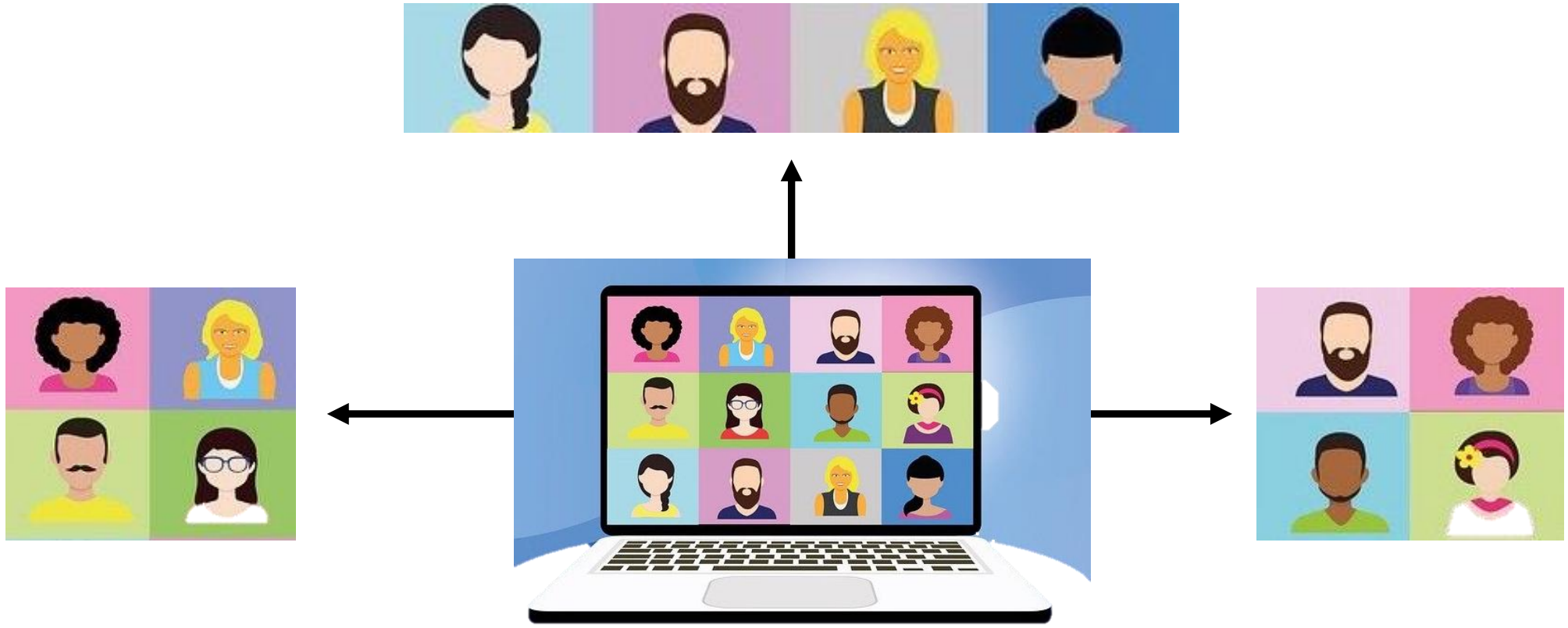


What are other ways we can get students talking when the whole class is together?



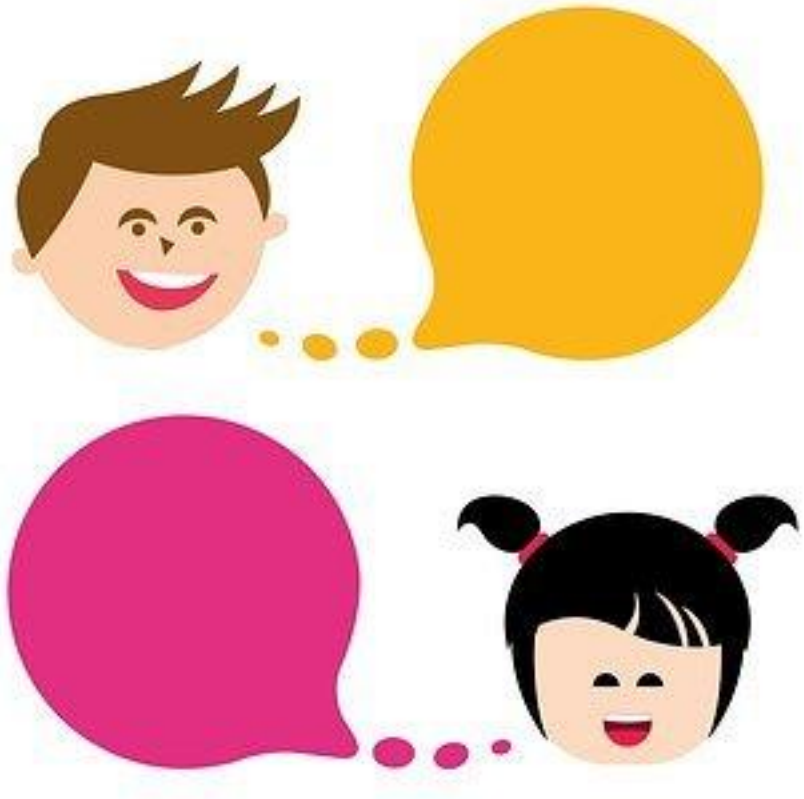


Synchronous – Breakout Rooms



Discussion

- Reserve time for Ss to speak freely in every class
- Link discussions to content or language target
- Ask open-ended questions
- Make effective groupings (more advanced or techy Ss can provide leadership)
- Consider time (older/more advanced Ss can discuss longer)



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Topic warm up	*Good morning! Today we're going to learn about life on the International Space Station. What would be the **best thing** about traveling to space? What would be the **worst thing**?*

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Get-to-know-you	*Find 3 things you and your partner have in common.*

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Language application	*Discuss with your partner: What is the most disgusting thing **you've ever eaten**?*
Get-to-know-you	*Find 3 things you and your partner have in common.*
Closing reflection	*Great job participating in the lesson today! Please share with a partner:* • *Something you learned* • *Something you wonder*

How can instructors motivate students to stay on task and speak English during breakout room discussions?

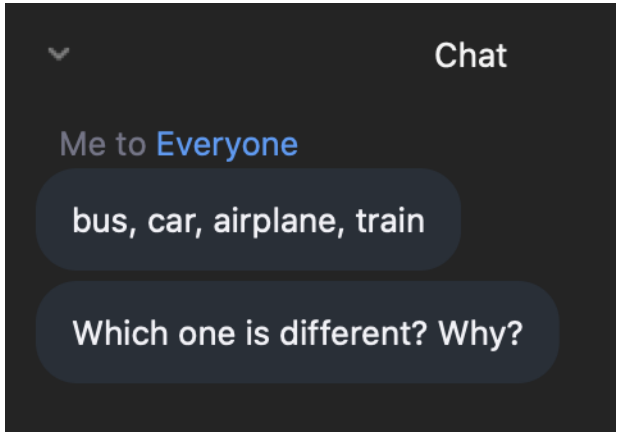
1) Teacher visits groups
2) Time limit
3) Task

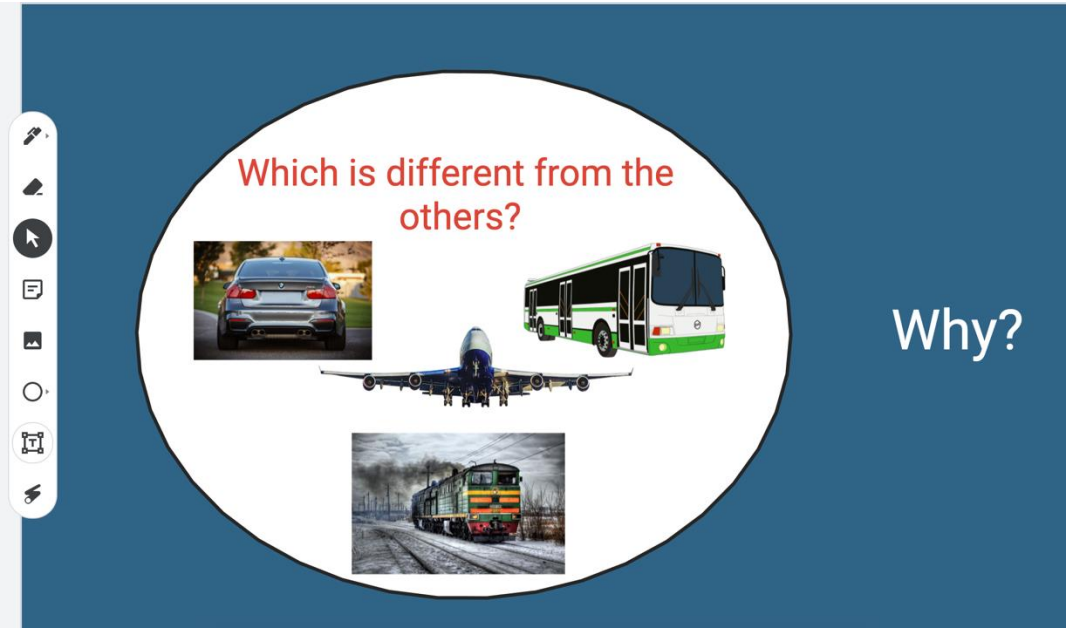
My go-to: “I’m going to pick a few students to share something their partner said.”

Games

Which is Different?

1. T models activity
2. T provides list of vocabulary words
   - Ss write words in notebook
   - T writes words in chat
   - T shares document
3. In breakout rooms Ss decide which word is different and why
   - Encourage critical thinking. There's more than one answer!
4. Ss prepare to share reasoning





Debates

To Prepare

1. T assigns Ss to groups that share same opinion

2. Ss prepare support for their side
    - Option to flip: Ss read article or watch video before class

Breakouts for Preparation

Debates

To debate!

3. T provides language and expectations for debate

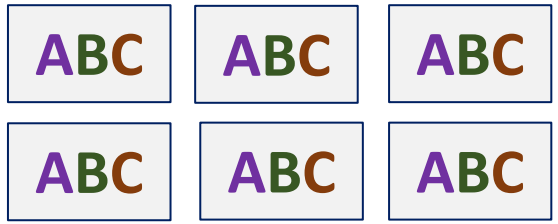
4. T makes new rooms with representative from each side

Functional Language Chart

Agreeing	Disagreeing	Contrasting opinions
• I (absolutely) agree. • I agree completely. • On the whole, I agree. • I see your point. • You have a point there. • I couldn't agree more. • I see what you mean.	• I'm sorry, but I can't agree with that. • I'm afraid I disagree. • That's not how I see it (the situation). • I don't entirely agree. • The facts don't support that position.	• Yes, but on the other hand … • That may be; however … • I see your point, but … • You raise an interesting point; however, … • I agree to an extent, but … • Perhaps, but don't you think … ?

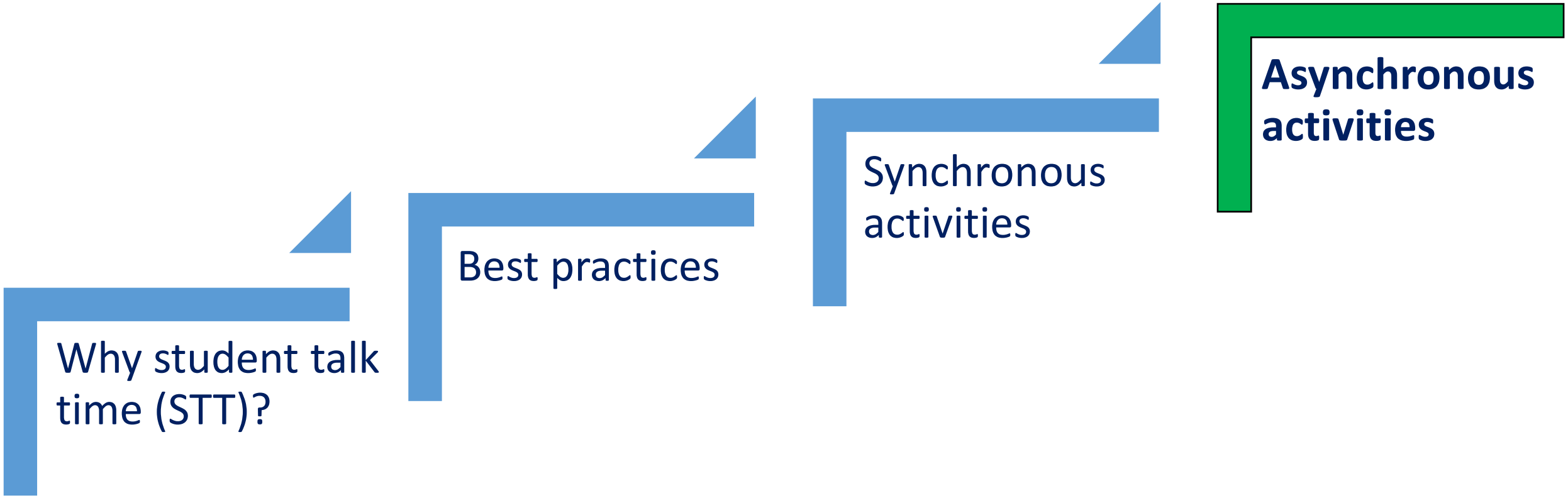
"The Great Mini-Debate" *English Teaching Forum*

Breakouts for Debate



What follow-up activity could students do after their debate?

Today's Plan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Messaging Apps

1. Ss send **instructional videos**

What is something you enjoy preparing in the kitchen? Provide step-by-step instructions to teach me how to make it!

Messaging Apps

1. Ss send **instructional videos**

2. Ss **answer** reflection questions

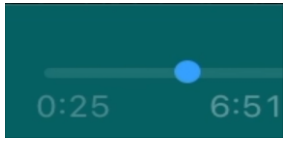
Today, we discussed dating and marriage.

*Record yourself speaking about ONE of the topics below for 1 minute. Vocabulary from today is **bold**.*

*<u>Option 1</u>: How has **online dating** changed romance in society?*

*<u>Option 2</u>: Do you think **arranged marriages** are a good idea?*

<u>Option 3</u>: What steps can **spouses** take if they are having problems?

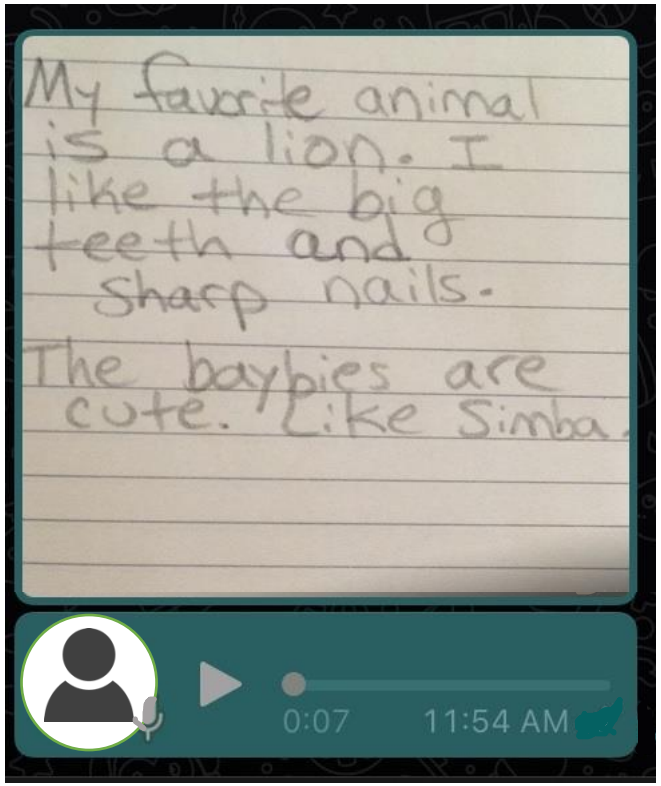


Messaging Apps

1. Ss send **instructional videos**

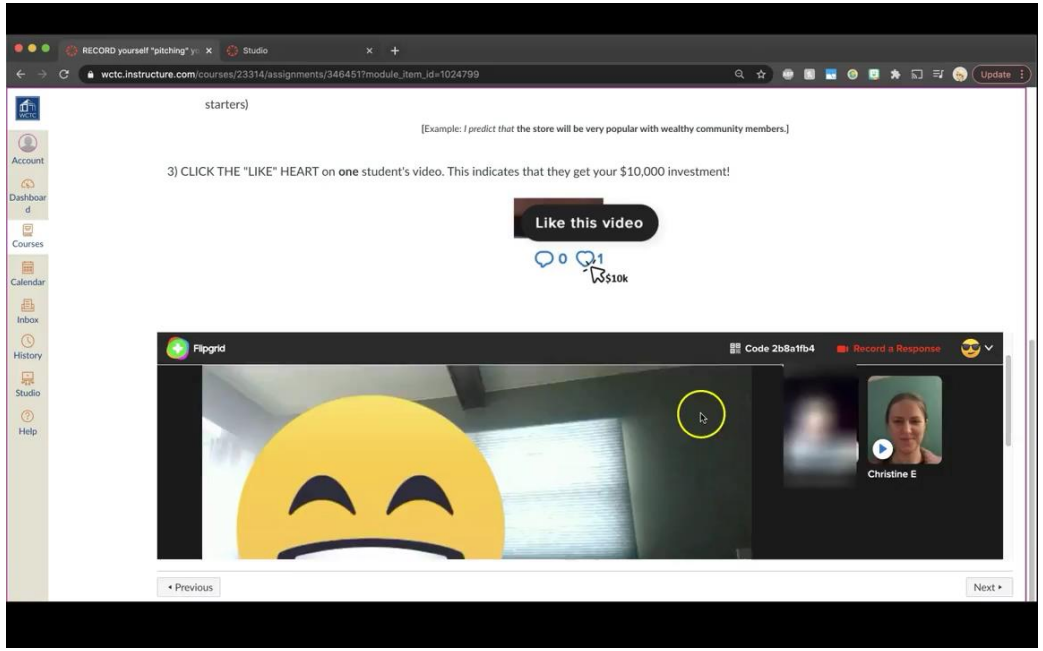
2. Ss **answer** reflection questions

3. Ss **read** their writing or homework answers



Flipgrid

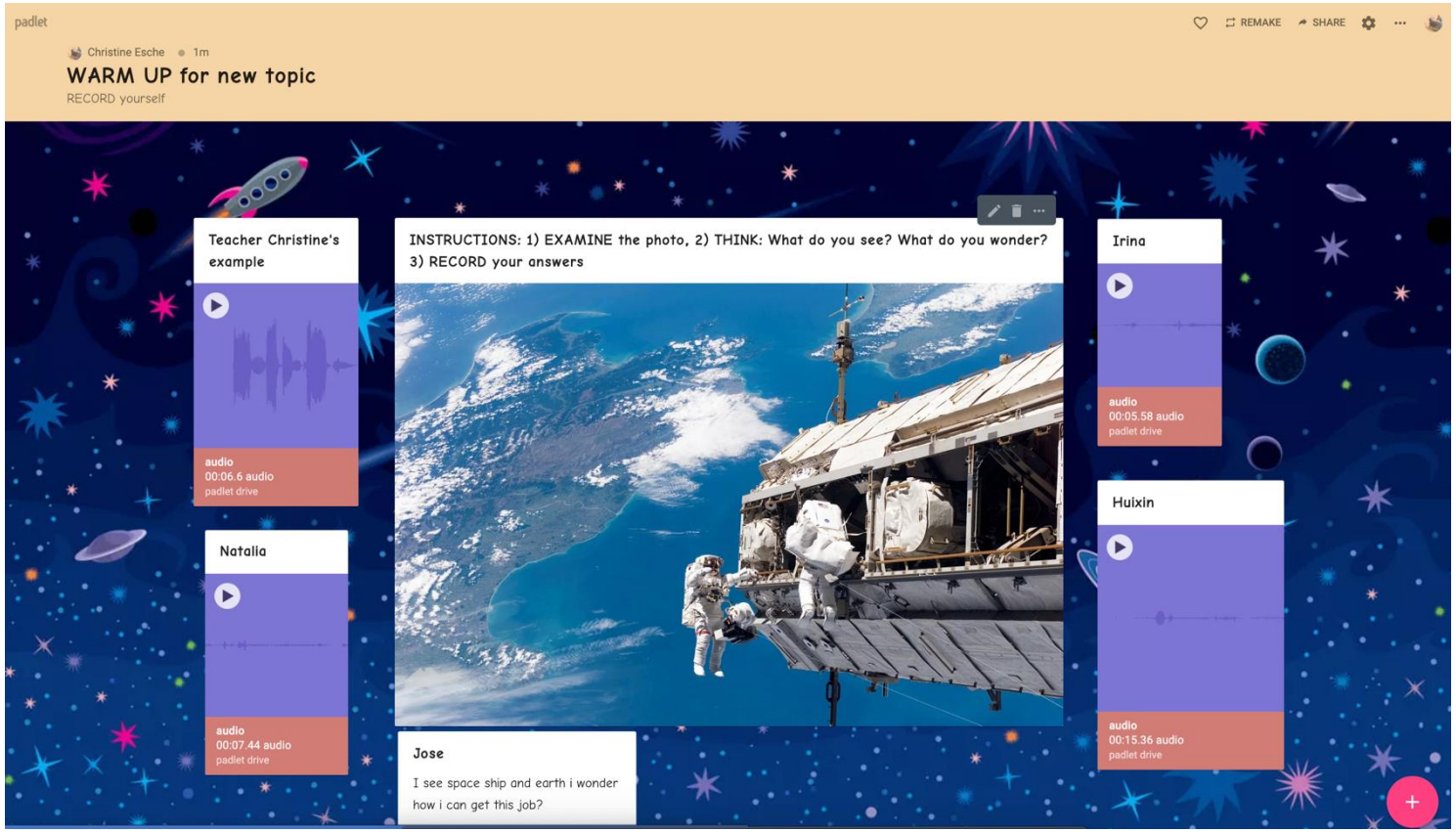
- Great for **presentations**
- Ss share recordings with classmates
- Ss watch each other's presentations and reply with text or video



Padlet

- Share audio/video/text/images on a class wall

- Great for
  - sharing opinions
  - sharing predictions
  - Telling stories
  - Making original sentences



Chatterpix

Make things talk!

1. Take a picture
2. Draw a mouth
3. Record voice
4. Add fun stuff
5. Save to phone
6. Send to instructor

Assignment:

1) Find something you love in your home

2) Tell us about it (10-30 seconds)

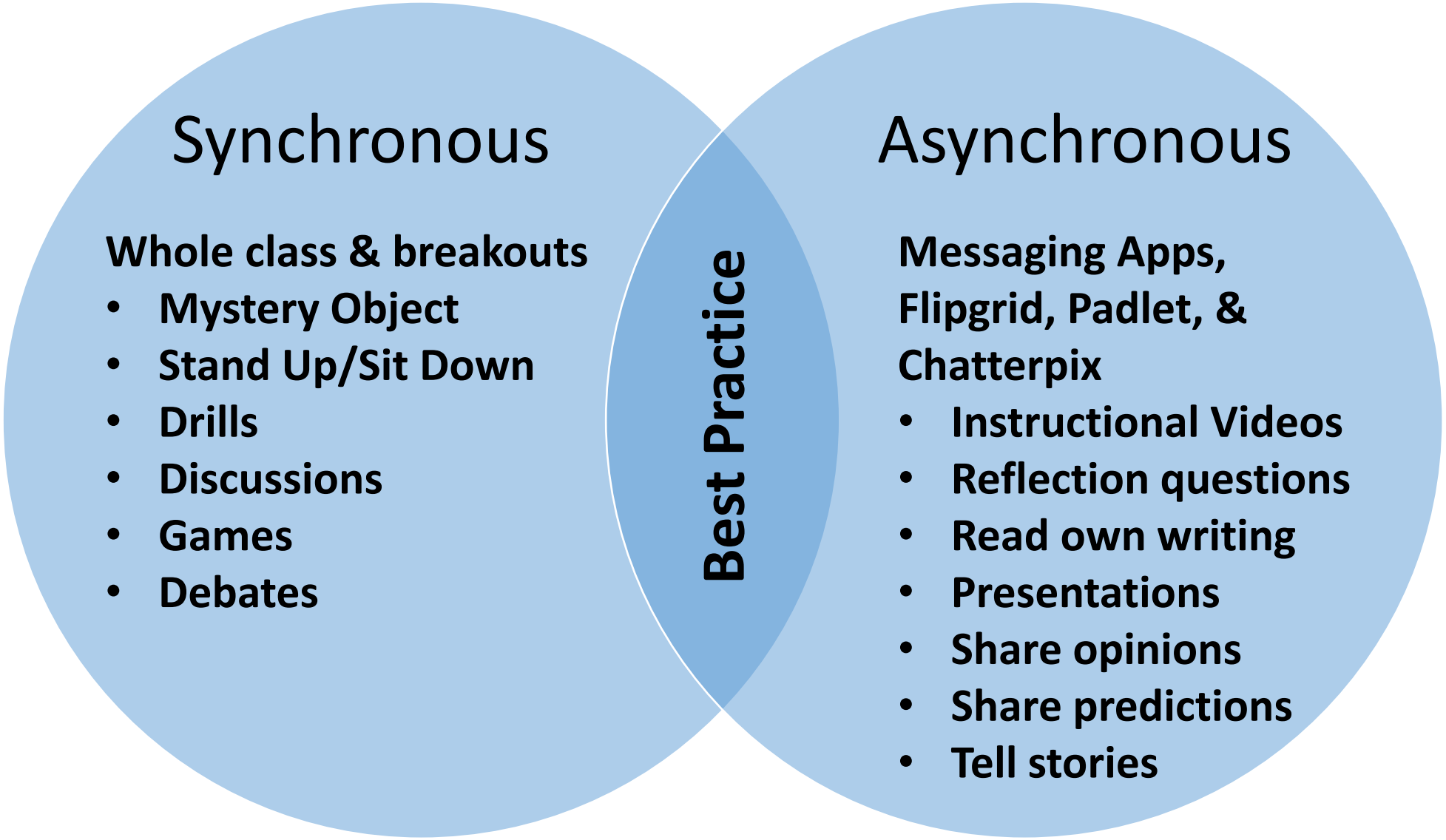
3) Send it to the class WhatsApp group

What's your favorite program for students to submit audio recordings? Why?

Keep in Mind

Do fewer things, better.

Summary


Synchronous
Whole class & breakouts
• Mystery Object
• Stand Up/Sit Down
• Drills
• Discussions
• Games
• Debates
Best Practice
Asynchronous
Messaging Apps, Flipgrid, Padlet, & Chatterpix
• Instructional Videos
• Reflection questions
• Read own writing
• Presentations
• Share opinions
• Share predictions
• Tell stories

Which of the activities, tools, or practices from today's webinar do you think you can start using in your class?

“Technology will not replace great teachers, but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.” –George Couros

References

- Benucci, Heather. “The Great Mini Debate.” *English Teaching Forum*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2017, p. 46, https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/etf_55_1_p45-48.pdf.
- *Wheel of Names*, wheelofnames.com/.

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